

closing the gates of my capital, I will defend my people to the last drop of my blood. Reign in happiness until the All Just, the Supreme Judge calls us both before His judgment seat."

Had he been less of a Christian and patriot, and just as good a soldier as he was, Constantine might have saved the city. Or perhaps it would be better to say, had the Greeks been as pious and patriotic as he, no graceful tapering minarets would now insinuate their beauty into the effect produced by the great dome of the one-time Christian church of Divine Wisdom—the mosque of St. Sophia. But the Greek people loved their orthodoxy better than their liberty. In vain the Emperor tried to find some common ground on which to appear for unity with, and help from the church at Rome. He was only execrated by an ignorant priesthood and cursed by a people who in their fanaticism cried "Better Islam than the Pope." Not a tenth of them were willing to assist in the defence of the city and Constantine was able to gather around him only 4,000 citizens who were ready to take their places on the walls. The others spent their time in idleness and in drinking within the city not assisting in any way but devouring without regard for the future, the winter's supply of provisions, Mahomet grew more and more threatening in his attitude, isolating the city and cutting off all supply by way of the Bosphorus and terrorizing the surrounding peasantry into submission and into providing food for the great army which he was assembling.

In 1453, at the end of a winter of terrible suspense on the part of the Emperor, the Turkish army moved against the walls of the doomed capital. For some months an open quarrel had seemed inevitable and the Emperor had used all efforts to strengthen the city and to secure aid from other Christian nations. These were "slow of heart to believe" that the danger was so imminent and delayed taking action until it was too late, so that the Emperor was unable to reinforce his little army except by a few hundreds of Venetian and Genoese allies whose trade interests at least caused them to support the Greeks. These proved to be men of rare courage, energy and skill, whose presence often revived the drooping spirits of the Greeks in hard places during the siege. To these were added some few galleys which lay behind a great chain which had been stretched across the Golden Horn from Stamboul to Galata. With these meagre forces Constantine defied all efforts of the fiercest Janissaries of the Sultan to set foot within the city. Fully 200,000 Turkish soldiers were massed along the four miles of walls which stretched from the Golden Horn to the Sea of Marmora. Huge cannon hurled great balls of stone at various gates along the way. Butresses, walls and towers were battered down during the day only to be built up during the night with such surprising rapidity and effectiveness, that the Sultan exclaimed in despair, "Would to Allah that I had such men!" Constantine labored ceaselessly to exhort his men to stand for their city, their church, and their homes, and rode along the walls day and night directing the energies of the besieged with fine energy and devotion, seeking at the same time to make peace between the different factions which existed in the city. Over an hundred and forty Turkish ships of war lay along